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made in 1820 by a committee of the House of Commons upon the question of doing away with the death penalty for many crimes, selections from Parliamentary debates on the Reform Bill of 1832, and the proposed Factory Acts of 1815 and 1833, selections from statutes, extracts from memoirs and newspapers—material rarely found in school libraries but most helpful to students, young and old. A few words of introduction or explanation accompany each selection and a good index adds to the usefulness of the work.

CHICAGO NORMAL SCHOOL

DORA WELLS

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*Composition and Rhetoric.* By CHARLES SWAIN THOMAS AND WILL DAVID HOWE. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909. Pp. 517.

Shall we ever have the Great American Rhetoric and Composition Book? Does it lie within the power of anyone to write such a book? Is it possible to make a textbook of that sort that will answer the local and the national requirements? Certainly many efforts have been made to produce just that sort of book, but all such efforts have failed. This failure often lies in the author's effort to spread his thick local conditions over a large area of supposed national deficiencies, thereby making a very thin coating for the wider field. Or, if he writes with a theory in mind, be it psychological or pedagogical, he is too likely to neglect the practical side of the business. If he has the practical side well in hand he is likely to fail in making the matter pleasing. From whatever point he approaches his subject he is almost sure to be unbalanced by the neglect of some essential quality that is not apparent in his limited experience. Should he be so fortunate as to have experienced the difficulties of teaching the mother tongue to pupils whose linguistic inheritance comes from the Germans, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, and the Russians, to name only a few nationalities, he would assuredly be less confident that he has the master idea to solve the intricacies of our American English. Indeed, it is asking too much of any teacher or textbook-maker to set forth a national system of teaching English. And it is also asking too much to expect anyone to write the *Great Book*. Let us be satisfied if the succession of books on rhetoric and composition adds a mite of information or suggestion to the solution of this vexed question.

But were we asked to name any one book that comes, in our opinion, to the nearest solution of this national question, the nearest to being the greatest book on rhetoric and composition, we should not hesitate to name Thomas and Howe's *Composition and Rhetoric*. This praise, we know, will sound like wild and whirling words in many ears. We stand ready to hear a cry of protest on every side; we expect to hear accusations of every sort from everybody who is particularly interested in some other book. But we are expressing only an individual opinion and a personal judgment. And for that opinion and that judgment we are glad to give our reasons.

To be perfectly frank we must say that we have watched Mr. Thomas' work in the Shortridge High School, Indianapolis, for nearly a decade. Furthermore, our knowledge of his work has been so intimate that we have seen his practice grow into a theory—a very mild and a very simple theory—and his theory grow into a little manuscript and his manuscript grow into a good-

sized book. (Very often the making of a textbook takes the opposite course.) Moreover, we have seen this book amplified and fortified by the assistance of Dr. Howe. Hence, though our personal relations with the main author have been very intimate, we trust that the relationship has not biased our judgment.

Now, if our frankness and our very uncritical attitude have led the reader of this review thus far we shall endeavor to give some of the reasons that lead us to such exalted praise of this book.

In the first place we are heartily, and we trust, intelligently, impressed with the point of view taken by the authors. Nowhere in the book is there an undue advertisement of a theory. The distinctive motive of the authors seems to lie in their having an old-fashioned idea that the teaching of writing and speaking English is in writing and speaking English—certainly not a very metaphysical theory. They have not littered their book with the mused-up, new-fangled ideas that mark so many recent books on the subject. "Our aim," the authors say, "is not to train writers in the finer graces of language. That accomplishment depends upon the individual student and lies beyond our power." Here is no theory that will please those who think that the teaching of English composition is one of the black arts which needs a mystic wand and a conjurer to reveal the secrets of simple speaking and writing. As a matter of fact it takes some courage to put forth a book that treats such homely topics as "The Composition as a Whole," "The Paragraph and Its Structure," "The Sentence," "Rhetorical Essentials of the Sentence," "Words," "Letter Writing," "The Forms of Discourse," and "Common Errors in Grammar," in a plain way and with an openness of mind that precludes any mystifications or suggestions of unusual difficulties. And it is equally a commendable trait to lead the pupil to think that speaking and writing English are not big black bugaboos hiding behind that frightful scarehead—the college entrance requirements. Could we only put ourselves into entire sympathy with the simple ideas expressed in this book, we should see many of our pupils take pleasure in their English work.

Though we have spoken of the simple ideas in this book we would not imply that the authors have neglected that other very essential feature of all good work in English—the "constant practice in the exercises." In this particular feature the book has pre-eminent and superior qualities. After a very careful examination of these exercises we can confidently affirm that the suggested topics for compositions are wholly within the scope of that universal human animal—the common, ordinary pupil. There is no drawing upon the knowledge of a pupil of what he has not experienced or what he has not read. Bernard Shaw is not used as an example of what a brilliant man may do in writing a witty conversation. *King Lear* is not referred to as a type for some particular example of a rhetorical principle. Burke and Macaulay and Carlyle are not used for the lack of simpler examples. Literary acuteness is not aimed at or even considered. Refined elements of speech—ever a confusing influence on young minds—are serenely neglected.

But above these excellent qualities, beyond the orderly, plain, and simple arrangement, beyond the excellent exercises, is the attention given to oral work in English. Any supervisor or superintendent who has carefully observed the English in other classes than the classes in English, will readily admit that there the pupil's English is the weakest. A pupil is very naturally inclined to

associate English with a particular teacher or with his prescribed books in English. To carry that precision of speech that he is inclined to observe in the English classroom into other classrooms is not, so he is only too apt to think, a very necessary accomplishment. Nor, and let us say it boldly, is he always impressed by the teachers of other subjects that he should carry the burden elsewhere; he gets enough of that in the English work. So, perforce, much of this oral work falls back on the teacher of English. He must so broaden the pupil's mind, so teach him orderly arrangement of thought, and so impress him with the desirability of using his mother tongue correctly, that he will handle other topics without bungling. Something of this kind of work is accomplished in the book under consideration. To detail the steps would be overstepping our allotted space.

Were our space for review purposes as unlimited as our enthusiasm for this book we should write at length on the unique method, everywhere in evidence in the volume, of instilling into the pupil's mind the valuable art of self-criticism. We should also tell of the scheme devised to show inexperienced teachers how to correct themes in an intelligent manner. Chapters on other essentials in English composition are also adequately treated.

A final word, however, is necessary to explain the time required for the book. It is made for a one-book course in English. It covers the whole course of three or four years, but it ill suits the requirements for a two-year course. Those who favor the single-book course will find the book adequate; those who favor a two-book course must look elsewhere.

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*Handbook of Composition.* By EDWIN C. WOOLLEY. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co. Pp. xxi+239.

This little book deserves the utmost praise. We have submitted it to every test that such a book may undergo, and we have not found it wanting in any particular respect. Its scope is wide and diversified; its helpfulness is direct and positive. The author does not overstate its usefulness when he says in his preface, "This manual is designed for two uses. It may be used, first, by students of composition for reference, at the direction of the instructor, in case of error in themes; second, it may be used for independent references by persons who have writing of any kind to do, and who want occasional information on matters of good usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, paragraphing, manuscript-arrangement, or letter-writing." An exhaustive index, a synopsis of the numbered rules, a wide glossary of misused words, and a list of words often mispronounced are only a few of the excellent features of this distinctive little book. Every teacher of English will find this the handiest book of its kind. We are sure that everyone who sees the book will wish to own it, and will praise it far more than we have done in this brief comment. We shall be surprised if both author and publisher are not gratified at the sale of the book.

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